BATMAN.
BLACK and WHITE
3
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R. CRAIG RUSSELL '96

BATMAN BLACK and WHITE

For Neal Pozner-
Who knew not everything was black and white

Cover by Barry Windsor Smith

Inside front cover by P. Craig Russell

Good Evening, Midnight

Written and illustrated by
Klaus Janson
Lettered by Bill Oakley

In Dreams

Written by Andrew Helfer
Illustrated by Liberatore
Lettered by John Costanza

Heist

Written and illustrated by Matt Wagner
Lettered by Tim Harkins

Beat Twigs

Written and illustrated by Bill Sienkiewicz

A Slaying Song Tonight

Written by Dennis O'Neil
Illustrated by Teddy Kristiansen

Inside back cover by Marc Silvestri and Batt

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GOOD EVENING, MIDNIGHT
story and art : KLAUS JANSON
letters : BILL OAKLEY
--STANDOFF ALL AFTERNOON-- OKAY-- G.N.N. HAS A LIVE FEED FROM THE SCENE--GREG, WHAT'S THE LATEST?

MARTIN -- I'M AT THE GOTHAM CITY BRIDGE WHERE A SCHOOL BUS FULL OF CHILDREN DANGLES PRECARIOUSLY OVER THE EDGE.
THE BUS WENT OUT OF CONTROL WHEN A SKIRMISH BROKE OUT BETWEEN THE DRIVER AND THE ESCAPED INMATE WHO HAD COMMANDEERED THE BUS.
HE BUS DRIVER ND ONE OF THE ILDREN HAVE EN KILLED.
COMMISSIONER GORDON, THE POLIC AND A SPECIAL SWA TEAM ARE IN PLACE
--BUT ARE HESITANT TO MOVE BECAUSE OF THE UNSTABLE NATURE OF THE BUS.
WHEN SKED ABOUT HIS PLAN, OMMISSIONER GORDON SAID--
--"THE CHILDREN ARE OUR FIRST--"
--CONCERN--
CLICK!
CLICK

GOOD EVENING, MIDNIGHT.
To my Son— Bruce Wayne
Dear Bruce,

I have just left you sleeping in your bed...
...yet I cling to you still, if but in memory.
The snow lies heavy against Wayne Manor.
It is so very quiet.
I hear you still, inside me.
Your laugh.
From the first moment I saw you, your joy has infected me.
It has changed me.
For you see, I was also born...
...that day when you arrived.

I ran through the snow to find you, calm and waiting.
Already, you were the teacher.
And I was beginning to learn.
Before you were born, I was a man convinced life was meant to be conquered.
And I spent every minute of my life in pursuit of that.
I was determined.
I was determined to conquer every disease, vanquish every hatred, put a torch to every darkness.
I was obsessed.
As I hope you will never be.
I want better for you.

Today, we celebrated your third birthday.
You have grown so much, my son.
I remember you taking your first steps.
Courageous.
Fearless.
Resourceful in the face of great odds.
I think of the coming days....
...as I watch you grow to be a man.
When I can speak to you of such things.

The love of children
The need for balance.
Disease will be conquered
And hate will be vanquished.
What you have taught me, I will teach to you.
There will always
be a light
to keep us
from the dark.

Your loving father, Thomas
To My Dear Son
JonSau 2-96

"GOOD EVENING, MIDNIGHT"

KLAUS JANSON

IT HAS LONG BEEN ACCEPTED AS FACT THAT KLAUS JANSON IS THE BEST KNOWN UNKNOWN IN THE WORLD OF COMICS. BY ONE POST RECORD, HOWEVER, AS HAS ALAN DAVIS CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION AS A PENCILLER AND COLORIST HE HAS FIRST COMMAND MAINSTREAM ATTENTION ON *DAREDEVIL*. JANSON TOOK TURNS ON THE GROUNDBREAKING THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS AND FOLLOWED THAT WITH BATMAN: GOTHIC. JANSON BELIEVES HE HAS A GREATER AFFINITY FOR BATMAN THAN ANY OTHER CHARACTER AND CONSEQUENTLY HAS ALWAYS TAKEN HIS BEST WORK ON THE DARK KNIGHT. NEVERTHELESS, "GOOD EVENING, MIDNIGHT" IS JANSON'S VERY FIRST WRITING FOR COMICS.

"IN DREAMS"

LIBERATORE

Italian artist Angelo Liberatore blew the comics world apart in the mid-1980's with his explosive creation ARAKNOX, serialized in America in HEAVY METAL magazine. Co-created with writer Stefano Tamburini, ARAKNOX was an all-out four-issue orgy of unbridled, supernaturally charged superheroic comic-book violence. Response was strong, and second appearances and interviews, leading to some of HEAVY METAL's highest-selling issues. Liberatore's radical stylistic departure here with a more mainstream approach to storytelling for "In Dreams."

ANDREW HELFER

"In Dreams" is not the first time Andrew Helfer has reinterpreted a classic character. His earlier work for THE SHADOW in the late 1980's was considered so controversial as to be unpublishable. He has also written television scripts, children's books and film novelizations. As an editor, Helfer has worked on practically every character in the DC Universe. He is currently the Senior Editor at DC's Paradox Press, which publishes the all-new Original Big Book series.

in dreams

. . AND THEN I WAKE UP, SWEATING AND COLD AND AFRAID TO EVER SLEEP AGAIN.
THE EXERCISES DIDN'T HELP, THE PILLS DON'T HELP. . . EVERY NIGHT IT'S THE SAME THING. EVERY NIGHT.
I WAS A HAPPY CHILD. MY PARENTS LOVED ME SO MUCH. THEY PAMPERED ME. PROTECTED ME. LIFE WAS A DREAM...
NOW IT'S A NIGHTMARE. NOTHING STOPS HIM FROM COMING FOR ME. EVERY NIGHT.
I WON'T SLEEP. NOT EVER AGAIN. IT'S HOPELESS.
BUT I KEEP THINKING WHY HIM? WHY BATMAN? WHY DID HE DECIDE TO TRY AND DRIVE ME CRAZY. WHY NOT SATAN, OR--
KAREN, THEY DON'T DECIDE ANYTHING. YOU'VE MADE THE DECISION TO BE TERRORIZED. YOU CREATE YOUR DREAMS
THERE'S AN ELEMENT OF REALITY IN DREAMS. . BUT WHEN THE DREAMER CANNOT DEAL WITH THOSE TRUTHS, THEY BECOME NIGHTMARES.
YOUR DREAMS HAVE REVEALED AN UNRESOLVED INCIDENT PERHAPS SOME SUPPRESSED MEMORIES OF THIS BATMAN FELLOW--
ONCE YOU CONFRONT THE UNPLEASANT REALITY, I'M CERTAIN THE NIGHTMARES WILL CEASE--
THEN THEY'LL NEVER END-- BECAUSE I CAN'T REMEMBER.
COME HERE, KAREN. I'VE SOMETHING I THINK WILL HELP.

YOUR NAME SOUNDED FAMILIAR THE FIRST TIME YOU CAME TO ME SIX MONTHS AGO I DID A LITTLE RESEARCH AND CAME UP WITH THIS.
YOU WERE YOUNG--FIVE YEARS OLD. YOU WERE MISSING A WEEK IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARD, THE POLICE SAID YOU REFUSED TO SPEAK A WORD OF YOUR ORDEAL.
WHEN YOUR PARENTS ARRIVED, YOU ACTED AS THOUGH NOTHING UNUSUAL HAD HAPPENED A PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATION WAS SUGGESTED, BUT YOUR PARENTS WANTED TO PUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR BEHIND THEM.
I'D HOPED WE COULD WORK TOGETHER TO BRING THE MEMORIES BACK AND SOMEHOW RESOLVE YOUR CONFLICT, BUT--
THIS ISN'T ME IT'S SOMEONE ELSE IT HAS TO BE SOMEONE ELSE-- BECAUSE I DON'T REMEMBER!
PLEASE, KAREN YOU WERE YOUNG AND FRIGHTENED YOU TRIED TO BURY THE PAST-- BUT YOUR MIND WON'T LET YOU--
NO!
KAREN-- PLEASE-- DON'T--
HELLO, JIM. I NEED A FAVOR. TO SET UP A MEETING WITH A FRIEND OF YOURS..

Oh, little playmate, I cannot play with you-- ♪
--my ♪ dolly has the flu-- ♫
HIYA, LITTLE GIRLIE YOUR MOM AND DAD CAME THROUGH WITH THE CASH, NOW IT'S TIME TO GET RID OF THE--
--I don't know what ♪ to do-- ♫
--EVIDENCE--
OW!
GO 'WAY! GO 'WAY!
YOU LITTLE PUNK! SEE WHAT I'M DOIN' TO YOUR LITTLE DOLLY--
-- GONNA HAVE TWICE AS MUCH FUN DOIN' IT TO YOU!
DOLLY.. DOLLY..
GREEEEESHHHH!!

YEAARRRGGGHH
HELLO, KAREN YOUR MOM AND DAD MISS YOU THEY SENT ME TO FIND YOU--
DOLLEEEEE!!!
I KNOW I LOOK SCARY.. BUT I ONLY WANT TO HELP YOU...
DOLLEEEEEE!!!
UNHHH!
CAN IT BE IT'S TRUE... THAT IT HAPPENED... TO ME...?
EVEN IF IT DID.. KNOWING THE TRUTH IS EASY. COMPARED TO LIVING WITH IT...

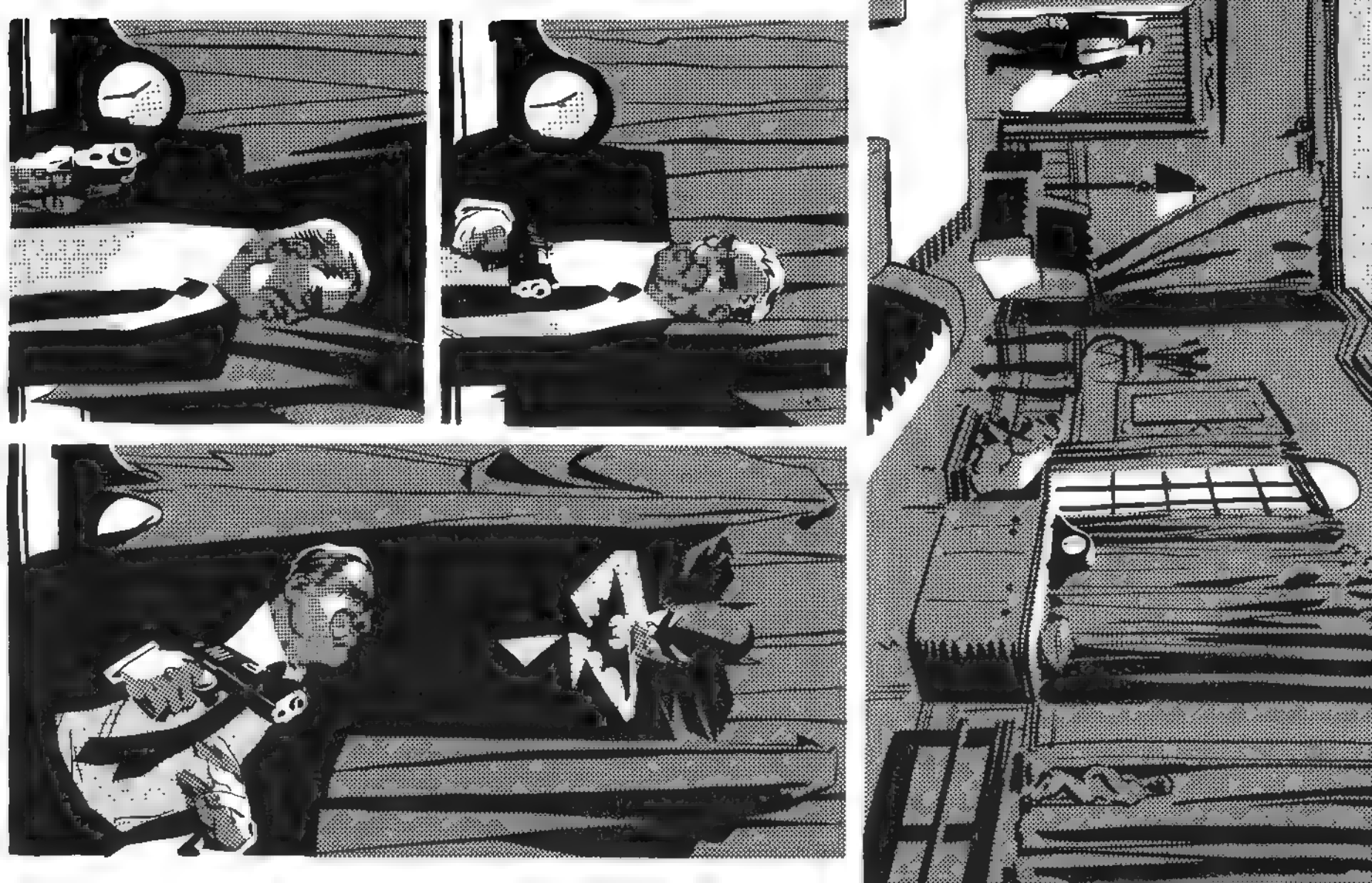
OH!
IT'S.. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. IT NEVER WAS.
YOU WERE ONLY TRYING TO HELP. YOU WERE ONLY DOING YOUR JOB
I TRIED BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING I FORGOT. YOU LEFT THIS BEHIND BACK THEN
SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG TO BRING IT BACK.
I THINK I UNDERSTAND NOW.
AND IT'S SOMETHING I CAN LIVE WITH

DID YOU TAKE CARE OF IT?
YES. SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT NOW. THE DOLL WAS THE KEY.
IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN SOMETHING ONLY A WITNESS TO THE EVENT WOULD KNOW...
IT WAS AS IF THE DOLL WAS THE LINK BETWEEN THE COMFORTABLE WORLD SHE'D KNOWN AND THE TERRIFYING WORLD SHE'D ENTERED.
WHEN SHE LEFT THE DOLL BEHIND, SHE TRIED TO LEAVE HER MEMORIES WITH IT.
BUT MEMORIES DON'T WORK THAT WAY, DO THEY, DOCTOR?
NOT IN DREAMS.
I KNOW...
... I HAVE A FEW OF MY OWN...
END

HEIST
by
MATT WAGNER
A FAT-CAT HOUSEHOLD-- GONE ON VACATION.
THIS WAS SEVERAL YEARS AGO "DOVE" JENNINGS AND HIS CREW HEARD TELL OF AN EASY MARK.
DOVE
BERNIE
T B.
HOBBES.
SPITCH
EASY PICKIN'S -- THE SECURITY, MINIMAL

THE STAFF WENT DOWN EASY LIKE ALL STAFF
THE HOUSE WAS FULL OF FINE THINGS -- ART, ANTIQUES AND, SURELY, MORE
LIGHTS WENT OUT
JUMPY *@#&$!! YOU SUDDENLY A BUNCH OF AMATEURS = THEY'RE ON TIMERS!
JUST KEEP YOUR FLASHES LOW. AND CHILL THIS JOB IS PURE GRAVY
SO, LET'S GET TO WORK TB -- YOU WATCH THE FRONT
GOT IT COVERED

SPITCH, YOU AND HOBBES TAKE THIS FLOOR I WANT THE PLACE &!%@$# PEELED!
YOU GUYS HEAR SOMETHING DOWN-STAIRS ?
YO, TB! EVERYTHING OKAY DOWN THERE ?
YEAH
S'COOL
ALL SQUARE ?
YEAH. WELL HE SAYS SO
I'M FINDIN' NOTHIN', HERE COUPLE A' BONDS
LET'S TRY THE NEXT ROOM
WHAT'S WRONG ?
IT'S STUCK--
*BOH!
THIS IS THE DOOR WE CAME IN, AIN T IT ?
WAIT, THERE'S SOMETHING



IT LOOKS LIKE--SOME KINDA SUPER-GLUE' SOMEBODY GLUED THE D--
THUMP
HOBBES?
SLAM!
BANG!
HEY, DOVE, WE GOT TROUBLE'
SOMEONE'S IN HERE WITH US' THEY GOT HOBBES! COULD BE COPS' MAYBE WORSE--
SsSsSssS--
GRRRrr.

BERNIE--
WH WH
WHAT D THAT LITTLE @$%/#*96 SAY?! WHAT THE #$%& IS HE SHOOTING AT?

SHUT UP
#
BAM
BAM

HOOTED OWL
HOO
DRUM'T DOVE!
TH-TH-TH
THAT WAS THE BAT MAN!!
DON'T LOSE YOUR LUNCH, BERNIE!
KEEP COOL
HHH
BERNIE!
NO!!
I KNEW A GUY GOT DONE BY THE BAT!! HE STILL CAN'T SLEEP RIGHT!
HH
NOT ME!!
-YEARGHH--

LATER, ACTING ON AN ANONYMOUS TIP--
THE COPS SHOWED UP TO FIND THE DOVE JENNINGS CREW, RED-HANDED AND GIFT-WRAPPED
THE CALLER HADN'T LEFT HIS NAME, BUT HE DID LEAVE HIS MARK
HEAR TELL, DOVE STILL CAN'T WIPE IT OFF
THE END

"HEIST"

MATT WAGNER

Matt Wagner's work straddles the edge between the eccentric underground comix view and the conventional, glossy graphic design and drawing style.

The groundbreaking novels of his creator-owned titles GRENDEL and MAGE have spawned a legion of fierce Matt Wagner fans.

Those fans who can get a more mainstream dose of Matt's work in conventional one-shots and miniseries like BATMAN: FACES and BATMAN/GRENDEL as well as Matt's monthly writing chores on SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE.

"BENT TWIGS"

BILL SIENKIEWICZ

Bill Sienkiewicz is a multiple Harvey Award winner and [illegible] whose unique artistic style, mixed and match genre issues and a place in comic book history. Bill has also received [illegible] in the comics world including the Eisner, Inkpot, Kubert and Yellow Kid as well as several Merit Awards from the Society of Illustrators. Recent Bill's [illegible] list of comic projects include ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN, STORY TELLERS and [illegible] VOODOO CHILD: THE ILLUSTRATED LEGEND OF JIMI HENDRIX.

A blustery dusk in Gotham...
In a usually quiet residential section of the city...
Usually.
DADDY! NO! DON'T HURT TIGER!
No! DADDY PLEASE!
DON'T DROP HER!
bent twigs
WHAT DID I TELL YOU, KYLE?-WHAT?! I'VE TOLD YOU AND TOLD YOU AND TOLD YOU..
I'M MEEOWN.
NO. PLEASE! SHE HAS KITTENS!
DON'T WANT TO DO THIS... BUT YOU DON'T LEAVE ME ANY CHOICE... I'M FED UP WITH YOU!
HSSSSTT MCOWRR
DADDY... NOOOO..
The situation goes from mad to worse in the blink of an eye..
I jump... and by the same measure of time, too late.
THIS IS IT, KYLE! NO MORE!
DADDY! I'M SORRY! I'LL BE GOOD! I PROMISE! PLEASE! DON'T..
NO!
NO NO NO
She twists, turns, tries to right herself.
She almost makes it.
Almost.
Her small spine snaps when her body strikes a frozen dumpster in the alley below.
Other bones break, sounding like sleet on glass.
She hits the snow like a rag doll. Skitters, slides..
Stops.
She can't move. She can't meow. Her eyes go wide, Then stare.
Fixed, mid-distance.
And like that, she's gone...
Usually, a fall from this height is not fatal to creatures blessed with superior balance and nine lives.
Usually.
But now, because of this boy's father, she dies, leaving behind a litter of orphans.
Rage and hatred grip my heart. I can barely speak, let alone think.
All I want to do is to hurt him— Severely. Repeatedly.

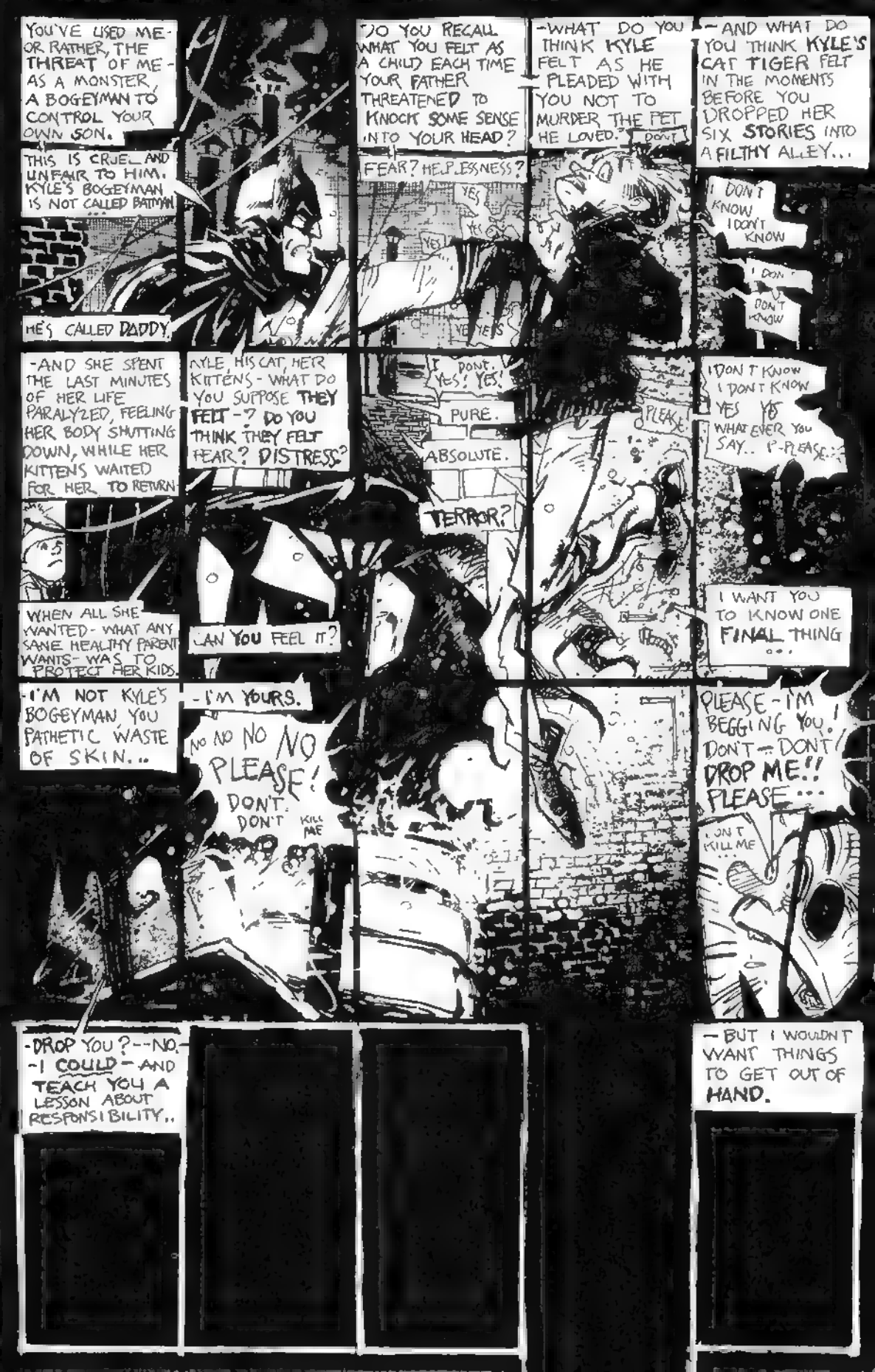
But there is a child involved and that changes everything...
YOUNG MAN.. ARE YOU OKAY?
Stupid stupid question.. The boy is in shock.
B-BATMAN?! UH. I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE... MAYBE YOU CAN TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM — GOD KNOWS I CAN'T.
SEE KYLE-?!?— BATMAN IS HERE. NOW YOU'RE IN TROUBLE.. I WARNED YOU HE'D COME ONE DAY TO STRAIGHTEN YOU OUT IF YOU DIDN'T LISTEN TO ME!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN ONE DAY IF-
YOU DON'T TALK YOU LISTEN.
THERE ARE TWO WAYS WE CAN DO THIS.
THE EASY WAY OR HARD.
EASY IS YOU GO TO THE POLICE AND WAIT FOR ME..
. TAKE THE BOY TO THE APPROPRIATE CHILD CARE AUTHORITIES.
SNF
THEN I RETURN WITH ASPCA OFFICIALS TO PRESS CHARGES.
CHARGES?!
—I DON'T UNDERSTAND. -BECAUSE OF THE CAT?!
DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE BEING A LITTLE EXTREME?
I MEAN, LOOK... I KNOW IT WAS A LIVING CREATURE AND ALL THAT BLAHDEBLAHDEBLAH -BUT HE JUST WON'T LISTEN- -UH. MY SON I MEAN...
- HE'S TRASHING HIS GRADES, TELLING LIES, NOT DOING HIS HOMEWORK...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
- FAMILY COUNSELING.
HAH. OH SURE! AND WHO'S GONNA PAY FOR IT YOU?
WHO ARE YOU, DONALD TRUMP OR BRUCE WAYNE OR SOMETHING?
SOME OF US HAVE TO WORK FOR A LIVING.
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO INDULGE A SPOILED BRAT.
-LET ALONE GO BROKE BECAUSE OF HIM...
MOST SCHOOL SYSTEMS OFFER THEIR STUDENTS THERAPEUTIC COUNSELING FREE OF CHARGE
OOHHHH-
-RIGHT. LIKE I'M GOING TO LISTEN TO SOME LAME SCHOOL SYSTEM STRANGER TELL ME I'M A LOUSY PARENT!
NOOOOO- THANK YOU
DON'T LET KYLE'S WIDE-EYED INNOCENCE ACT FOOL YOU...
HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.
HE'S NOT INNOCENT, I ASSURE YOU... TALK TO HIM - SEE FOR YOURSELF.
HE'S GOT PROBLEMS!
I SEE YOU'VE CONSIDERED ALL YOUR OPTIONS CAREFULLY.
-AND IT'S GRATIFYING TO SEE THAT THE WELFARE OF YOUR YOUNG SON AND HIS CAT ASSUME SUCH A HIGH PRIORITY.

LOOK-YOU'RE MAKING WAY TOO BIG A DEAL ABOUT THIS CAT THING.
I DIDN'T REALLY MEAN TO LET HER GO... IT'S JUST THAT I WAS TRYING TO TEACH KYLE A LESSON ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY...
IT JUST GOT OUT OF HAND--KYLE DIDN'T LEAVE ME WITH ANY CHOICE.
I MEAN· DON'T YOU EVER GET FRUSTRATED?
— ALL KYLE HAS TO DO IS GET HIS GRADES UP, AND STRAIGHTEN UP HIS ACT...
AND I'LL LET HIM KEEP A KITTEN, OR I'LL FIND HIM ANOTHER CAT...
BESIDES... IT WAS JUST A STRAY FOR GODSAKE... THE STREETS AND SHELTERS ARE FULL OF THEM.
WHAT'S ONE STRAY, MORE OR LESS?
NO NOT STRAY.
PET.
HIS...
PET.
TIGER.
WHATEVER.
LISTEN, YOU'RE TRYING TO PAINT ME AS SOME KIND OF MONSTER, BUT I'M NOT. I HAVE MY REASONS...
I HAVE MY... WAYS...
I HAVE MY... Y'KNOW...
- LIKE I SAID
LOOK! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE! - EVER SINCE KYLE'S MOTHER LEFT US - HIM - WHEN HE WAS A BABY, I'VE HAD TO BE BOTH FATHER AND MOTHER TO HIM - TO KYLE, I MEAN.
WHEN A WOMAN I'M INTERESTED IN FINDS OUT I'VE GOT A TEN YEAR-OLD SON - POOF! THAT'S IT! GOODBYE! - NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I CALL OR WRITE OR CALL OR WRITE, OR CALL OR WRITE, SHE TELLS ME SHE WANTS NOTHING TO DO WITH ME! - THE WOMAN, I MEAN...
I'VE EVEN SENT A FEW WOMEN I'VE MET ASTROLOGICAL COMPATIBILITY CHARTS TO SHOW THEM THAT WE'D BE A GOOD MATCH ... BUT STILL NADA.
I SEND GIFTS AND CARDS, TELL THESE WOMEN THAT THEY CAN COME VISIT-- HELL- THEY CAN EVEN MOVE IN AND SLEEP ON THE COUCH TO SAVE MONEY AND SNIF - AND EXCUSE ME..
SOMETHING IN MY EYE..
AND SO THEY CAN SEE THAT I'M A-A GOOD FATHER! - I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE I'M PUTTING ANY PRESSURE ON THEM TO BE A MOTHER TO KYLE.. -FAR FROM IT.
I MEAN, KYLE AND I ARE A PACKAGE DEAL, IT'S TRUE..
-BUT STILL, NO LUCK.
NO LUCK
NO LUCK
AHEM.
WELL. THERE ARE A LOT OF LOSERS OUT THERE...
Y'KNOW· WOMEN AFRAID TO COMMIT.

GUESS I TRY TO BE PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT IT, THOUGH...
THINGS HAPPEN AT THE SPEED THEY'RE MEANT TO HAPPEN.
HEH...
GOOD LORD!...COULD YOU IMAGINE THESE WOMEN IF THEY KNEW I ALSO HAD A FILTHY STRAY CAT AND MEWLING FURBALLS CLAWING AND SCRATCHING AND LEAVING KITTY BOMBS IN THE LINEN CLOSET?
I MEAN...TALK ABOUT HAVING THE DECK OF LIFE STACKED AGAINST YOU...
BUT IT'S NOT LIKE I'M COMPLAINING OR ANYTHING...NO SIR
"LET LOVE IN YOUR HEART." THAT'S WHAT I ALWAYS SAY.
BUT-- DO I REALLY, REALLY NEED MY SON PLAYING "BORN FREE" WITH MY BLANKETS AND COMFORTERS UP HERE ON THE ROOF..?
TAKING CARE OF STUPID CATS-
-WHEN HE SHOULD BE DOING HIS HOMEWORK AND CLEANING THE APARTMENT LIKE A GOOD SON!?
I DON'T THINK SO.
I THINK I'VE BEEN TOO DAMN INDULGENT, TOO DAMN LENIENT! THAT'S WHAT I THINK.
IF I BEHAVED LIKE YOU WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, MY FATHER WOULD HAVE BOXED MY EARS...
HE'D HAVE KNOCKED SOME COMMONSENSE INTO MY HEAD...
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, KYLE? DON'T YOU HAVE ANY COMMON SENSE?
YOU HANG OUT WITH THESE CATS UP HERE FOR HOURS AND HOURS AND HOURS! I DON'T GET IT!
YOU DON'T SEEM TO KNOW ENOUGH TO COME IN OUT OF THE COLD.
DON'T YOU WANT TO MAKE ANYTHING OF YOUR LIFE? OR DO YOU JUST WANT TO WASTE IT HIDING FROM THE WORLD UP HERE?
HUH? IS THAT IT?
HUH?
WHY ARE YOU HIDING? WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?
WELL?!
WHAT? WHAT? WHAT?
AAAAAHHHH
I GIVE UP.
I'M FED UP...
..YOU, DADDY..

-I'M HIDING FROM YOU...
EXCUSE ME, WHA?
-YOU'RE HIDING FROM ME?!
-FROM ME?!
-THAT'S IT! YOU'RE GROUNDED! FOR GOOD THIS TIME OR UNTIL YOU START SHOWING ME SOME DAMNED TRESPECT!
NOW DO YOU SEE WHAT I MEAN BATMAN?
DO YOU SEE WHAT I HAVE TO DEAL WITH?
I SEE EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON.
WEL--.IF YOU SEE WHAT'S GOING ON, WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?
-INSTEAD OF ENCOURAGING HIS DISOBEDIENCE BY PICKING ON ME!--WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, HUH?
I MEAN.. HELLOOOO- ...-ANYBODY HOME?
DONK
-WELL-- ANSWER ME MR. HOT-SHOT-DARK-KNIGHT-DO-NOTHING-DO-GOODER...
WHAT KIND OF EXAMPLE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE PROVIDING? HMM
WHAT'S THE MATTER?..
-CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE? HA. HA. HA!
AAH, THAT'S IT!
I'M GOING INSIDE.
I MIGHT AS WELL BE TALKING TO A FREAKIN' WALL!

STOP. YOU CAN'T WALK AWAY FROM YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS.
-SO I'M UNDER ARREST?!
YES...
BUT I AM ALSO GOING TO REQUEST AN INVESTIGATION.
WHAT?! WHAT FOR?!
YOUR STABILITY AND SUITABILITY AS A PARENT NEEDS TO BE ESTABLISHED.
YOU WANT CREDENTIAL, YOU WANT REFERENCES? ASK ANYONE. ASK MY NEIGHBORS. ASK MY FRIENDS. ASK KYLE EVEN.
-AND KYLE'S MOTHER?
-WHAT DOES SHE THINK?
THAT B*TCH?!
WHO CARES?! SHE'S A LIAR! DON'T BELIEVE ANYTHING SHE SAYS, SHE'S OUT TO RUIN ME!
-THE ONLY PERSON SHE GIVES A DAMN ABOUT IS HERSELF!
LISTEN - I'M A GOOD PARENT! I'M A SENSITIVE GUY... I'VE NEVER HIT KYLE. NEVER.
SO IF YOU EVEN ATTEMPT TO CHARGE ME WITH ABUSE, I'LL SUE!
AND I'LL HAVE YOUR CAPE IN A SLING!
I NEVER USED THE WORD 'ABUSE' ALTHOUGH I DO BELIEVE IT APPLIES.
THE WORD I WAS THINKING OF IS 'NEGLECT.'
JUST AS DAMAGING, JUST AS PAINFU...
-ONLY ALL THE SCARS AND BRUISES ARE ON THE INSIDE.
NEGLECT, HUH?! HOW DARE YOU?! YOU BARGE IN ON A FAMILY MATTER, CRITICIZE ME IN FRONT OF MY OWN SON, TRY TO BLAME ME FOR HIS BAD BEHAVIOR AND LOUSY GRADES.
YOU UPSET HIM AND TRY TO TURN HIM AGAINST ME - TO FEAR ME... HATE ME
HOW MUCH MORE OF YOUR HELP CAN MY FAMILY TAKE?
I HAVE NOTHING FURTHER TO SAY TO YOU..
-NOW IF YOU'RE FINISHED HARASSING HARDWORKING, RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS.
GET LOST.
-MAYBE YOU CAN GO AFTER SOME REAL CRIMINALS -
LIKE THE JOKER, OR THE RIDDLER
REAL-!?!
URK!
.. A SWIMMER IS ATTACKED BY A SHARK...
THE SWIMMER, UNDERSTANDABLY UPSET, BEGINS TO POUND ON THE SHARK, TRYING DESPERATELY TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH...
-THE SWIMMER SCREAMS, "STOP! - LET ME GO! YOU'RE KILLING ME!" THE SHARK GETS ANNOYED.
LET- PUT ME DOWN.
"HOW RUDE," SAYS THE SHARK, "-TO INTERRUPT ME WHEN I'M EATING!"
GET IT?
WHAT? GAG WHATA YOU TALKIN ABOUT?
I DON'T GET IT.
NO - YOU REALLY DON'T GET IT...
GACK!
WHAT WHAT
-I WOULD HATE TO LEAVE YOU HANGING...
PLEASE PUT ME DOWN
GAG
AU
-PUN INTENDED
YOU SAID YOU'RE A SENSITIVE GUY. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT YOU ARE INDEED EXTREMELY SENSITIVE WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR OWN PAIN AND SUFFERING...
-BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE PAIN AND SUFFERING YOU INFLICT ON OTHERS, YOU ARE CLUELESS
SO CLUELESS, IN FACT, THAT I CAN'T HELP BUT GET FURIOUS WITH YOUR LACK OF EMPATHY.
FURIOUS - AND...
-FRUSTRATED.
RP PLEASE D DON'T


YOU'VE USED ME - OR RATHER, THE THREAT OF ME - AS A MONSTER, A BOGEYMAN TO CONTROL YOUR OWN SON.
THIS IS CRUEL AND UNFAIR TO HIM. KYLE'S BOGEYMAN IS NOT CALLED BATMAN...
HE'S CALLED DADDY.
DO YOU RECALL WHAT YOU FELT AS A CHILD EACH TIME YOUR FATHER THREATENED TO KNOCK SOME SENSE INTO YOUR HEAD?
FEAR? HELPLESSNESS?
YES
YES
YES
YES
-WHAT DO YOU THINK KYLE FELT AS HE PLEADED WITH YOU NOT TO MURDER THE PET HE LOVED.
DON'T
-AND WHAT DO YOU THINK KYLE'S CAT TIGER FELT IN THE MOMENTS BEFORE YOU DROPPED HER SIX STORIES INTO A FILTHY ALLEY...
I DON'T KNOW I DON'T KNOW
I DON'T KNOW
-AND SHE SPENT THE LAST MINUTES OF HER LIFE PARALYZED, FEELING HER BODY SHUTTING DOWN, WHILE HER KITTENS WAITED FOR HER TO RETURN
WHEN ALL SHE WANTED - WHAT ANY SANE HEALTHY PARENT WANTS - WAS TO PROTECT HER KIDS.
KYLE, HIS CAT, HER KITTENS - WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY FELT - ? DO YOU THINK THEY FELT FEAR? DISTRESS?
CAN YOU FEEL IT?
I DON'T. YES! YES!
PURE.
ABSOLUTE.
TERROR?
I DON'T KNOW I DON'T KNOW YES YES WHATEVER YOU SAY.. P-PLEASE...
I WANT YOU TO KNOW ONE FINAL THING...
-I'M NOT KYLE'S BOGEYMAN YOU PATHETIC WASTE OF SKIN..
-I'M YOURS.
NO NO NO NO PLEASE! DON'T. DON'T KILL ME
PLEASE - I'M BEGGING YOU! DON'T - DON'T DROP ME!! PLEASE...
DON'T KILL ME
-DROP YOU? --NO.- -I COULD - AND TEACH YOU A LESSON ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY..
-BUT I WOULDN'T WANT THINGS TO GET OUT OF HAND.

A blustery evening in Gotham...
I said that there are two ways to go through this...
The easy way... and the hard.
Violent and non-violent...
...Painful and not...
I was mistaken.
...naive and simplistic...
Blaming others for our ills is easy. Pulling a trigger is easy.
Victimizing ourselves and others is easy...
Our courts are clogged with those who see personal responsibility as the other guy's job.
When it comes to real personal growth...
...facing our pain... our fears... our demons...
There is just one way to go through it...
-The only way.

A slaying song tonight

Written by Dennis O'Neil Art by Teddy H Kristiansen

Merry Christmas, Santa
Up yours
-a wonderful Christmas surprise at home, Ginny.
More presents?
Even better.

LOOK!
what do you see, little girl? Maybe a sled and eight reindeer?
Or a wonderful Christmas star shining in the east?
No. The Batman.
'Fraid not, sweetiecakes. Batman is what we call an urban myth. Like alligators in the sewers. Or the girl in the bar who--
Phil!
Sorry. Maybe when you're older.
Anyway, Batman. He's not real. He's just someone people imagine is real. Though why anyone would want to imagine a weirdo in a Bat suit is beyond me.
I mean, what would a Batman do?
Somewhere in the city, somewhere nearby, there is a killer.

His target is the Benning family.
Phillip Benning's testimony put a certain death merchant named August Simbry in the electric chair last night.
Gus Simbry's last act was to order the execution of Phillip Benning. And his wife. And his daughter
That much Batman has learned. But not the identity of the killer.
There are seven million people in Gotham City
Seven million scurrying, chatting people--
--both wisdom teeth hacked out--
--put that baby in to fourth gear--
--fifth wife was a vegetarian--
--see she'd had implants--
--busted in to my store and took one lousy pillow--

-men, women and children rushing to the warmth of family and friends-
-got out of the cab in the middle of nowhere--
-absolutely forbid fireworks on New Year's eve-
--to brightly lit rooms pungent with the smell of holly and pine. The good citizens of Gotham City.
And, somewhere among them, a brute with a weapon intent on murder.
And, alone on a rooftop, shivering in the wind, a weirdo in a bat suit.
Ah, the Benning's. Merry Christmas.
Same to you, Father Vincenzo.
See you tommorrow, Father
Anything special on tap for the holidays, Phil?

Boy, is there ever! A fella down at the office has this brother who dresses in a Santa suit. I'm paying him twenty bucks to come see Ginny.
He oughtta be here any minute now.
Merry Christmas, Father.
Back at you, Phil
Boy, I can't wait to see Ginny's face.
He'd like to see the child's face, too.
She's . what? six? seven? just a little younger than he was when his parents were slaughtered in front of him.
No Christmas for him that year, nor any of the years since.
The life he's fashioned from pain and rage allows for nothing so innocent as Christmas.
Nothing moves on the quiet street except the snow.
No, something is moving. A solitary figure trudging cautiously down the icy sidewalk.

If you've got nothing in that bag except presents
The Hell--!
...if you've got nothing in mind except yuletide cheer...if you're not the jolly old elf who stole a pillow to stuff under your jacket...
--if all of that is true, then I'll step aside and apologize for bothering you.
And to all a good night.

Where is he? It's almost ten--
Where's who, Mommy?
Someone's at the door.
SANTA!
Who else would be coming to see a good little girl named Ginny on Christmas eve?
This is my best christmas ever!
Mine too, Ginny. Or at least--
-The best in a long, long time.
END.
TEDDY K JAN 96

"A SLAYING SONG TONIGHT"

TEDDY KRISTIANSEN

A native of Denmark, Teddy Kristiansen has made an indelible impression on the comics world in a very short period of time. Working primarily on limited series and one-shots, he has become one of the most sought-after young artists in the business. Always bold and inventive in its approach, Teddy's work can be seen in issues of GRENDEL TALES, SANDMAN, and SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE. His upcoming HOUSE OF SECRETS for DC/VERTIGO promises to be another dazzling and memorable foray into comic-book storytelling.

DENNIS O'NEIL

For over twenty years, Batman editor and writer Dennis O'Neil has put the "dark" in the Dark Knight and has been the guiding force behind the Batman mythos. He has been praised as a master of the comics form and as the dean of American comics. He prefers to think of himself as, simply, "a working professional storyteller."

Dennis has written most of Marvel's and DC's major characters including Spider-Man, Iron Man, Daredevil, Superman, Wonder Woman, and the Justice League of America. His Green Lantern/Green Arrow series in the early '70s is hailed as the first "relevant" comic book, and his late '80s title, The Question, is credited with being a forerunner of "mature reader" comics.

FINAL ISSUE

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